

A quarter-century ago today, as our family members were down on our knees laying tile on the basement floor of our new house, the news came over the tube: JFK had been shot, his eminence brought low in the splatter of a single bullet. From our Cape Cod beach we can see Camelot #2, not Tennyson's but Kennedy's. Motorists often ask "Where is it?" We live in the geographical as well as the temporal afterglow of His Eminence JFK. Which has set me to reflecting on eminences, **glowing leaders**, in church & Christian action.

1. In every field at any time there are figures who for the field & for the media function as **personal symbols**, symbolic personages, of the field. Often, but not always, the same persons are the eminences both internally (for those in the field) & externally (for the media). Sometimes the eminence is so mainly positionally, structurally: "He may not be a great archbishop of Canterbury, but he's ours & the only one we've got." Sometimes the eminence is so because of character (in the moral sense, or because "a character"); sometimes because of authorship; sometimes because of managerial ability ("He can make things happen, get people to work together."); sometimes because their personal impulse starts movements and/or founds or reinvigorates institutions; sometimes because they come to be seen as inventors or idea-or-process innovators. Some come to eminence quietly, others as protagonists/antagonists in human storms. Some "have greatness thrust upon them" in one direction while going about their business in another (instance M.L.King, Jr.; names & faces come before me in all these categories, & I resisted all but this one).

2. As a title ("your Eminence"), the word is restricted to religion, where it is restricted to RC cardinals (including, therefore, the pope). The word is Latin, meaning to "stick out, project"; cp. Am. English, "a standout" (RHD2: somebody "remarkably superior" in some way, or nonconformist). An eminence sticks out from both crowds, the internal (of hisr workworld) & the external (the particular workworld's penumbra, its "laity"; & also the generality of humanity).

3. Eminences are more made (on location, as Geo. Bush is becoming "presidential") than born (genetically capable-&-predisposed). Sometimes they appear as local clusters, as in 5th-c. BC/BCE Athens; sometimes globally, as in religion in the 6th c. BC/BCE; sometimes as two interacting local clusters, as in the N.England & Midatlantic US Founding Fathers. They may emerge from any class: the aristocracy (eg, Churchill), the middle class (eg, Jesus), the lower class (eg, Jesse Jackson). [Don't let my instances throw you! Think up your own.] As to nature/nurture, most cases of eminence are indeterminate. Some surely, against circumstance, are naturally, temperamentally, predisposed to excel, born with leadership ambition, the will to power-over (ie, to control & direct), an extra dollop of competitiveness, a joy in conflict & conquest---which can be used for the glory of self (arrogantly) or of God (humbly, as "a steward of the divine mysteries"). Few religious leaders are a pure type of either. I happen at the moment to be giving a close read to ELMER GENTRY: a pure type of the former, Sinclair Lewis having fun at seeing how pure he can make the case of this repulsive reverend. Which brings me 'round to a.....

4. **Double warning:** (1) Noneminents with little power-drive or with a strong power-drive that has not brought them to eminence may unjustly judge an eminent as driven more by power-lust than by God-love--from ignorance in the former case & envy-jealousy in the latter; & (2) The high power-drive of eminents may distort their view of noneminents & blind them to low-power virtues & values. Both failures invite the demons of misunderstanding, discontent, & disruption--as so often the the pastor/people relationship. I hold priestcraft, ordination, to be both necessary & the widest open door for the devil.

5. Sometimes an eminence seems to appear out of nowhere, like Melchizedek. Our most eminent russologist, Geo. F. Kennan, calls Gorby "a miracle." (In his field, GFK is "ahead of" [pre-eminent] the other eminences.) Such a figure elicits appropriate **awe**--reverence, more than respect. Our souls are imperiled here by defect (not having eminences to reverence, or not reverencing those we have) & by excess (the hubris of letting the reverence expand into worship--"your Worship"

as a title of bishops is a quaint relic reminding us of this blasphemous abuse).

6. So we arrive at a consideration of the human **dominance/submission** contratendencies. The former tempts bishops to overbush & their cleric & laic followers to underthink. Thinking underlings were such a nightmare to the bishops that they had dug up & burned the bones of Wyclif, who in Englishing the Bible did so with the prayer-vision-hope "that every ploughman may learn to read the Word of God for himself." I adduce two parallels: Most slaveowners (in USA, Guyana, everywhere) actively resisted, punishing where it was in their direct or indirect power, those who sought to teach the slaves to read; and totalitarians oppose liberal learning among the masses....On the other side, look at the evil effects of oversubmission: (1) Roman Catholic laity are only now beginning to take responsibility for the individual decision-making both implicit & explicit in the documents of Vatican II; (2) The American black male has barely begun, in the mass, to recover from the baleful effects of slavery; and (3) Kennan says Gorbachev was shocked to find the bottom 30-40% of the USSR populations politically inert, so brainwashed to submission as to be unresponsive to the hopes proffered by glasnost & perestroika....NIGHTMARE: The current American failure to educate 30-40% for functioning with dignity in the present & oncoming society confronts us not with Otto Kerner's "two nations" based on race but with two nations based on culture, one nation, the underclass, not viable in the culture. Keeping the **undernation** from exploding will require repressive measures brutalizing to the **overnation** (on which see the early sci-fi classics). Too late now for millions, but not too late to force adequate education on their offspring. But that forced feeding, once feasible & practiced, has become politically & legally impossible: the barriers are labeled "child abuse" & "students' rights." IRONY: A lowerclass child can escape forced education in the name of human dignity but cannot escape being thrown into the pit of social impotence & parasitism, a worse indignity than forced learning. (It's romantic nonsense that learning can't be forced: the pull of love & the push of fear are both of them effective teachers. And forced education would brutalize society less than will keeping the lid on the undernation's rage at being permanently on the outside looking in. As for moving the mass of dropouts to learn, positive motivators now being tried are hardly making a dent, & negative motivations are inhibited by "entitlements.")

7. The **charismatic eminence**, as eg Hitler, JFK, & M.L.King Jr., is a hope-giver. So was the Rev. Jim Jones of People's Temple, & so is Lee Iococa. Hitler & Jones were lightningrods of hate as well as hope, & was Father Chas. Coughlin, the world's third great radio orator (Hitler being the first, FDR the second, & Churchill the fourth). All charismatic eminences are gifted **orators**. (ELMER GANTRY's power derives from his seductive "barytone.") JFK did little but by word & gesture created Camelot #2 (with Jackie's silent help). By wit, conviction, & intelligence, he projected himself on the national & world screens as a *homo futurus*. His luminous words, as much or more Ted Sorensen's as his, ignited idealistic benevolence ("ask...what you can do for your country") & the belief that tomorrow can & must be better than today. What made the '88 Presidential race such a bore & disappointment was the fact that though at their conventions the two candidates gave off a few sparks, neither is close to being a charismatic eminence. Like it or not, the White House is first a podium & pulpit: the congregation wants to know, first of all, whether the candidate can preach (the typical weakness of "pulpit" search-committees, of televangelists' viewers, & of cult victims).

8. **Jesus** teaches how to be both leader & follower (Mark 10 et al), & it's a double rebuke & warning. He offers us a critical consciousness about whom we treat as eminent, & why. I note uncomfortable parallels between showbiz & religion in what catapults into "star-quality" eminence; too, I should throw in the "handlers" of candidates for election. The mass of TV interviewees are on the tube for just having had a book published! What criteria should apply to leadership, eminence?

9. "Happiness in Slavery" is the head of Pauline Réage's preface to her horrifying STORY OF O (Grove/65), a perceptive study of follower-dependency.